

# **Sending Money Home: Colombian Contemporary Migration Networks and Remittances to the Coffee Region**

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## *Paper Proposal*

Diverse destinations chosen by contemporary emigrants leaving from the same region give researchers an opportunity to evaluate a 'destination effect' on migration networks and remittance behavior. This paper analyses differences between Colombians who migrated to Spain and the United States. The evidence suggests that migration networks and remittance behavior of Colombian migrants in the United States and Europe are different. Moreover, differences in migration policies and language between both destination countries should have effects on network size and strength. I hypothesize that differences in network characteristics have effects on migrants' labor performance, likelihood of return, and remittance behavior. The data used for this analysis are quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data come from a remittance's beneficiary national survey and a household survey in the coffee region. The qualitative data come from focus groups on the migration expectations and remittances use of families left behind in the coffee region.

Literature on remittance behavior has suggested that migrants who are expecting to return are more likely to send money to their family than migrants who are expected to settle in the country of destination. In addition the literature on migrant networks indicates that in those areas of origin where the prevalence of migration is high and the social networks play a role in facilitating migration remittance behavior and return are more likely than in areas with weak social networks. In this paper I propose to analyze not only the relation between migrant networks and remittance behavior looking at the Colombian case, but also if differences in the conditions at destination have an impact in migrant networks and remittance behavior. Particularly I will study the Colombian migration to the United States and Spain two main international migration destinations for Colombians.

The United States and the Spanish immigrant legislation are markedly different, and these differences have become even larger after 2001. It is increasingly difficult for any person to migrate the United States regardless of their country of origin. However, immigrant legislation in Spain has facilitated the regularization of immigrants from Central and South America in the recent years. In the light of changes in legislation migration social networks become more important for migrants facing increasing entry barriers. Moreover, language differentials between these countries of destination might play a relevant role in immigrant labor adaptation, remittance behavior and likelihood of return. Migrant social networks for people traveling to the United States should be more relevant than for those traveling to Spain. Migrants from Spanish speaking countries generally experience language difficulties in the United States and due to changes in legislation and border controls experience increasing barriers to migrate.

To evaluate differences in migrant labor experience, migrant social networks and remittance behavior between Colombians migrants who traveled to Spain and the United States I will use three sources of data. The first data set contains about 25,000 observations of migrant beneficiaries in a random sample of exchange houses located in the main urban areas in Colombia. The second data set comes from a household survey collected in the metropolitan area of the largest city in the coffee region. This area registered a migration prevalence rate of 21%. The household survey contains a representative sub-sample of household with at least one usual member living abroad (n=1,000). The survey includes indirect information on the experience of the current migrant at the time of the survey and direct information from all returnees. The third data set comes from 20 focus groups collected in the coffee region on migrant expectations and remittance use.

The household survey provides data appropriate for the analysis of labor status of the current migrant population and likelihood of return. I plan to estimate the probability of employment of the migrant for different periods using logistic regression and controlling for changes in legislation, trip duration and language use among other variables. The probability of return is going to be estimated using a life table approach.

The data set on remittance beneficiaries provides information to assess the average migrant remittance behavior from the United States and Spain. I will analyze migrant behavior in terms of the socio-demographic characteristics of the remitter and the beneficiary. To explore patterns in the United States and Spain I will perform a comparative analysis on their frequency, volume, and time since the last migration trip of the remitter.

The paper will have five sections. The first section provides a literature review on migrant social networks and remittance behavior and a comparative analysis of immigrant legislation in the United States and Spain. The second section presents a comparative analysis of migrant labor performance and likelihood of return from the United States and Spain. The third section contains a comparative analysis of migrant remittance behavior. The fourth section analyzes expectations of migration and remittance use in the areas of origin for persons with a family member with migration experience in the United States and Spain. The last section provides conclusions and areas of further research.